Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01100 031749Z

43
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 OMB-01

ACDA-05 SAB-01 SCCT-01 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 EB-07 OC-05

CCO-00 NEAE-00 /080 W
---------- 029742
P 031452Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8477
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDDON
AMEMBASSY PRAIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USIA WAHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1100

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, LE, SY
SUBJ: SYRIANS SUSPECTED IN JAN 31 ATTACK ON TWO BEIRUT DAILIES

REF: BEIRUT 1065

SUMMARY: LARGE, WELL-CONDUCTED ATTACKS JAN 31 ON TWO BEIRUT DAILIES WHICH RECEIVE FUNDS FROM IRAQI REGIME ARE OF CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE. ATTACKS, WHICH HAVE ELICITED ALMOST UNANIMOUS CONDEMNATION, WERE CONDUCTED BY SYRIAN-SPONSORED SA'IQA AND PROBABLY HAD BLESSING OF SYRIAN OFFICIALS IN LEBANON, MOST PROMINENTLY COL. 'ALI MADANI. SYRIAN CULPABILITY, WHICH IS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01100 031749Z

WIDELY ASSUMED, HAS RAISED IMPORTANT QUESTIONS REGARDING

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

SARG INTENTIONS IN LEBANON. AT MINIMUM, LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN "REJECTIONISTS", AS WELL AS OTHER POTENTIAL OBSTRUCTIONISTS, HAVE DRAWN CONCLUSION THAT DAMASCUS IS PREPARED TO USE IRON FIST TO MAKE ITS INITIATIVE IN LEBANON SUCCEED. SUCH TACTICS, HOWEVER, WILL EVENTUALLY ADD TO PRESSURES FOR AN END TO OVERT SYRIAN ROLE HERE AND SOME OBSERVERS ARE ALREADY DISCERNING SYRIAN MANEUVERS TO EXTEND THEIR RESIDUAL INFLUENCE OVER LEBANESE SCENE. WE FIND MOST OF THE EVIDENCE ADDUCED THUS FAR SKIMPY, BUT IT IS ONLY LOCICAL THAT THE AASAD REGIME WOULD NOT INVEST ITS PRESTIGE SO HEAVILY TO SET THE LEBANESE HOUSE IN ORDER WITHOUT TAKING PRECAUTIONS TO BE CERTAIN THAT IT REMAINS THAT

WAY. WE SHALL BE FOLLOWING SITUATION, THEREFORE, FOR TANGIBLE SIGNS OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS OVER THE LONGER TERM. END SUMMARY.

1. OFF(LOCATED IN SHIYAH) OF BEIRUT DAILIES "AL MUHARRIR" AND "BAYRUT" WERE ATTACKED EARLY EVENING JAN 31 BY LARGE, WELL-ARMED FORCE. ATTACKERS KILLED SEVERAL, INCLUDING "MUHARRIR" EDITOR NAYIF SHUBLAQ, AND WOUNDED NUMBER OF STAFFERS IN TWO OFFICES. ATTACK, WHICH SHOWED CONSIDERABLE COORDINATION, WAS PROBABLY CARRIED OUT BY ELEMENTS OF THE SYRIAN-SPONSORED SA'IQA AND THERE IS CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT IT WAS
CONDUCTED WITH FOREKNOWLEDGE OF SYRIAN OFFICERS IN BEIRUT. "BAYRUT," AND TO A LESSER EXTEND "AL-MUHARRIR," ARE SUPPORTED BY THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT.

2. INCIDENT, WHICH HAS AROUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN LEBANON, WAS TIMED BETWEEN 1900 AND 2000 HOURS LOCAL WHEN MAXIMUM NUMBER OF NEWSPAPER STAFFERS WOULD BE ON PREMISES. IBRAHIM AMER, EGYPTIAN STAFFER ON "BAYRUT", TOLD EMBOFF CONTACT THAT ATTACK WAS WELL-PLANNED AND INVOLVED RECOILESS RIFLES, MORTARS AND AUTOMATIC WEAPONS WHICH WERE EMPLOYED TO PIN DOWN OCCUPANTS OF OFFICES. ATTACKERS THEN USED KEROSENE TO SET FIRE TO "BAYRUT" PREMISES, WITH RESULT THAT MANY OCCUPANTS, INCLUDING AMER, SUFFERED BURNS AND SMOKE INHALATION DAMAGE. AMER AND OTHER VICTIMS FROM WHOM WE HAVE RECEIVED INDIRECT REPORTS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01100 031749Z

ARE CATEGORIC IN BLAMING SA'IQA AND IMPLICATING COL. "ALI MADANI, ONE OF TWO SYRIAN MEMBERS OF TRIPARTITE HIGHER MILITARY COMMITTEE, WHICH IS SUPERVISING CURRENT CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON.

3. INFORMATION DEVELOPED FROM LEBANESE ARMY SOURCES BY DATT TENDS TO CONFIRM INVOLVEMENT OF COL. MADANI, ACCORDINGHTO THIS INFORMATION, MADANI WAS IN SHIYAH AFTERNOO

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

JAN 31 AS PART HIS EFFORTS TO DISMANTLY REMAINING BARRICADES
IN THAT AREA IN LINE WITH PROGRAM OF HIGHER MILITARY COMMITTEE.
WHEN HE DISCOVERED SANDBAG EMPLACEMENT OUTSIDE
"MUHARRI" OFFICES, MADANI DEMANDED IT BE REMOVED.
OCCUPANTS OF EMPLACEMENT REFUSED AND FIRED ROUND BETWEEN
MADANI'S LEGS. MADANI PROCEEDED TO HIGHER MILITARY
COMMITTEE TO REPORT AND PROMISED ACTION TO SOLVE PROBLEM.
ATTACK FOLLOWED SHORTLY THEREAFTER.

4. ATTACK HAS AROUSED PREDICTABLE OUTCRY FROM PRESS
CIRCLES, PALESTINIANS ("REJECTIONISTS" AND "MODER-
ATES") AND LEBANESE LEFT. ACCORDING TO PALESTINE NEWS
AGENCY, WAFA, "MODERATE" PALESTINIANS, INCLUDING
SA'IQA LEADERSHIP, LABELLED INCIDENT THE WORK OF "UN-
DISCIPLINED SA'IQA ELEMENTS". NEVERTHELESS,
MANY INFORMED OBSERVERS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT SYRIANS
ARE BEHIND THE ATTACK, WHICH IS INTERPRETED VARIOUSLY AS
(A) OPENING ROUND IN SUPPRESSION OF PRO-IRAQI BAATH AND
PALESTINIAN "REJECTIONISTS"; (B) RETALIATION FOR RECENT
ATTACK ON LEBANESE ARMY ESCORT OF SYRIAN FONMIN
KHADDAM IN BEKAA (ACCORDING TO THIS VERSION, IRAQI
BAATH WAS CULPRIT RATHER THAN "LEBANES ARAB ARMY"
OF LT. AHMED AL KHATIB) OR (C) WARNING TO LEBANESE PRESS
TO EXERCISE CAUTION RE SYRIA AND SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON.
PFLP, IN BITTER COMMUNIQUE, WAS UNEQUIVOCAL IN ITS
ACCUSATIONS: "SA'IQA FROCES LAUNCHED THEIR BARBARIC
ATTACK ON "BAYRUT" AND "AL-MUHARRIR" IN ORDER TO CON-
FIRM SERIOUSNESS OF SYRIA'S INTENT TO SUBJECT RESISTANCE AND
NATIONALIST FORCES IN GENERAL, AND REJECTIONIST FORCES IN
PARTICULAR, TO DEMAGOGIC DICTATORSHIP THAT FORMS MAIN PART
OF RECENT AGREEMENT ACHIEVED BY SYRIAN INITIATIVE AND BY
SYRIAN ROLE, OF WHICH STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN SAID,
"U.S. RECOGNIZES CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE OF SYRIAN GOVERNMENT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 01100 031749Z

IN LEBANON"... ATTACK AGAINST THESE NEWSPAPERS REVEALS
REAL NATURE OF THIS DEMOGAGIC DICTATORSHIP, WHICH IS
DIRECTLY LINKED TO EFFORTS TO REACH PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN
MIDEAST."

5. COMMENT: INCIDENT THUS FAR HAS SEVERAL CURIOUS
ASPECTS, NOT THE LEASE OF WHICH IS UNICERSAL CONDEMNATION,
INCLUDING BY PRO-SYRIAN ELEMENTS IN COUNTRY; AS WELL AS PRIME
MINISTER KARAME. IF, AS APPEARS PROBABLE, SYRIAN OFFICIALS
IN LEBANON COUNTENANCED ATTACKS, THEY HAVE MADE NO RPT NO EFFORT
PUBLICLY TO JUSTIFY OR RATIONALIZED THEM IN TERMS OF EN-
FORCING CEASEFIRE AGAINST DISRUPTIVE FACTIONS. NEVERTHLESS, ALL
AND SUNDRY HAVE DRAWN LESSON THAT SYRIANS ARE PREPARED TO PLAY
ROUGH TO ACHIEVE THEIR POLICY OBJECTIVES HERE. ACCORDING TO
SEVERAL ACCOUNTS OF INCIDENTS, MORE THAN 100 MEN IN TWENTY-TWO

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

LANDROVERS PARTICIPATED IN ATTACKS; IT IS STRETCHING
CREDULITY A BIT THIN TO VISUALIZE THIS FORCE AS UNDISCIPLINED
BREAK-AWAY BAND.

6. IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF INCIDENT AND WIDESPREAD SUSPICION OF
SYRIAN CULPABILITY WILL BE TO INCREASE RESENTMENT OF SYRIAN
PRESENCE AMONG MUSLIM AND PROGRESSSIVE ELEMENTS, WHERE
SOME SIGNS OF DISAFFECTION WERE ALREADY EVIDENT.
THUS, PRESSURE FOR EARLY WITHDRAWAL OF VISIBLE SYRIAN
PRESENCE WILL PROBABLY BECOME STRONGER. AT SAME TIME, NO
ONE BELIEVES THAT SYRIANS, WITH SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST IN LEB-
ANESE DEVELOPMENTS AND HEAVY INVESTMENT OF NATIONAL PRESTI

IN MAKING PRESIDENT ASAD'S INITIATIVE TO RESOLVE DOMESTIC
CRISIS HERE SUCCEED, WILL BE CONTENT TO LEAVE FUTURE EVENTS
IN THIS COUNTRY TO CHANCE OR THE VAGARIES OF LEBANESE
POLITICS, NOT ONLY THE PRO-IRAQI ELEMENTS, WHO ARE SYRIA'S
NATURAL RIVALS ON THE LEBANESE SCENE, BUT ALL WHO MIGHT AT
SOME POINT RUN AFUL OF SYRIAN POLICY ARE NOW ALERT TO
SYRIAN PLANS TO STRENGTHEN AND CONSOLIDATE THEIR INFLUENCE
UPON LEBANESE INTERNAL SCENE AGAINST THAT DAY WHEN THE OVERT
SYRIAN PRESENCE WITHDRAWS. SOME COMMENTATORS ARE
ALREADY PROFESSING TO SEE EVIDENCE THAT DAMASCUS IS AN-
NOINTING LEBANESE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS, OVER AND ABOVE
SA'IQA AND THE PRO-SYRIAN BAATH, TO SERVE AS SURROGATES IN
THE FURTURE. WE DO NOT YET FIND THIS EVIDENCE CONVINCING,
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 BEIRUT 01100 031749Z

BUT SHALL BE WATCHING CLOSELY FOR INDICATIONS OF SYRIAN IN-
TENTIONS. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY TO US THAT SYRIANS, HAVING
RESCUED LEBANON FROM ITS OWN SPECIAL KIND OF HELL, WILL
DEPWWT WITHOUT EXACTING SOME PRICE, WHICH WILL
LEAVE KAMASCUS IN A POSITION TO PREVENT A REPETITION OF
PAST STRIFE.
LAMBRAKIS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, INTERVENTION, ARBITRATION, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT01100
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760040-1035
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760289/aaaadakz.tel
Line Count: 208
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 BEIRUT 1065
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIANS SUSPECTED IN JAN 31 ATTACK ON TWO BEIRUT DAILIES
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, LE, SY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006